



Built Environmental Characteristics Report

North Ridge West

Background

In early April, residents of the North Ridge West neighborhood in north Raleigh submitted a petition to City Council requesting consideration for a neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations analysis. This analysis is the first step in the potential creation of a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCOD). NCODs are zoning overlays that preserve and enhance the general quality and appearance of neighborhoods by regulating built environmental characteristics such as lot size, setbacks, residential density, building height, and vehicular surface area. NCODs generally apply more restrictive standards than base zoning districts. As stated in the citizen petition, the intent behind the request is to maintain the current built character of the area and prevent subdivision of existing lots that could result in increased density.

Per City Council's direction, Planning staff has completed an analysis of the particular built characteristics requested by the North Ridge West residents: lot size, lot width, setbacks, building height, and distance between buildings. This report presents results of the analysis.



Study Area Overview

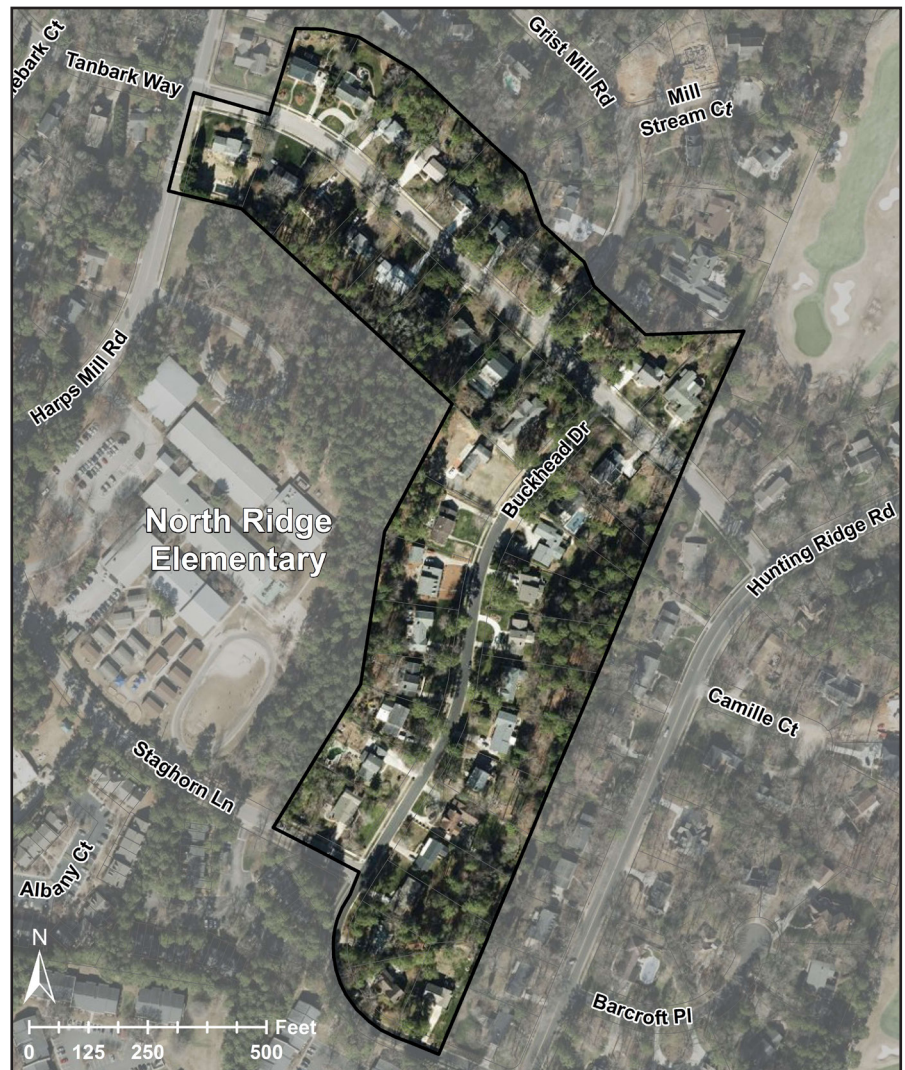
The North Ridge West neighborhood is located in north Raleigh just north of the North Ridge Country Club and adjacent to North Ridge Elementary School. Nearby major streets include Harps Mill Road to the north, Falls of Neuse Road to the west, and Hunting Ridge Road to the south and east. The study area includes 41 properties, comprising approximately 24 contiguous acres. These properties front on Buckhead Drive and Tanbark Way. The only use in the study area is single family residential, constructed between 1969 and 1975, and the average lot size is close to half an acre. Figure 1, below, shows a map of the study area.

There are no vacant properties and all lots are built out. The zoning for all properties is Residential-6 (R-6) which allows up to 6 dwelling units per acre. R-6 zoning also permits smaller lot sizes and widths compared to the current build-out of the neighborhood.

Although not required at this step in the process, the area does demonstrate initial compliance with the locational guidelines for areas to be rezoned to an NCOD:

- **Minimum 15 contiguous acres:** the requested study area is approximately 24 contiguous acres.
- **Rezoning application must be signed by a majority of property owners within the area proposed to be rezoned:** though this is required only at the rezoning stage, the citizens' petition included signatures of support from 21 property owners in the study area.
- **At least 75 percent of the lots must be developed:** there are no vacant lots in the study area.
- **Located in an area in which City Council has adopted specific neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations into Section 5.4.3 of the UDO:** though this guideline only applies at the rezoning stage, the residents have initiated the process of adopting specific built environmental characteristics and regulations into the UDO.

Figure 1, Map of North Ridge West Study Area



Analysis

The Unified Development Ordinance Sec. 5.4.3.D.3. directs staff to assess properties within the study area for each of the built characteristics requested by residents. The code asks staff to identify the “specific built environmental characteristics and regulations that reflect the predominant representation of the lots within the neighborhood study area.” In this context, “predominant” is defined as the metric for each characteristic that can be met by 75 percent of lots in the study area.

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools, staff calculated the specific built characteristics—lot size, lot setbacks, lot width, and distance between buildings—that were requested by residents. Staff used a range finder to collect buildings heights by conducting a site visit. Figure 2 summarizes the predominant values for these built characteristics and provides other relevant quantifiable information.

When looking for minimum values, such as is the case for lot size, lot width, setbacks, and building spacing the predominant characteristic is that value where 75 percent of properties exhibit larger built characteristics. Where a maximum value is sought, such as that for building height, the predominant characteristic is that value where 75 percent of properties exhibit smaller built characteristics.

The figures below highlighted in grey demonstrate predominant characteristics specifically requested by the petitioners. Petitioners asked for lot size, setbacks including; front, side, rear, and corner, building height and distance between buildings. Figures are also included demonstrating the range of characteristics within the neighborhood.

Although there is a fairly wide range of values for these characteristics, the fact that the 75th percentile, the average, and median figures are close together shows that there is a relatively uniform development pattern in the area today.

Figure 2. Built environmental characteristics summary

Characteristic	Predominant Character (25 th Percentile) minimums	Predominant Character (75 th Percentile) maximums	Range (min-max)	Average	Median
Lot Size	19,828 SqFt	23,775 SqFt	13,305 – 30,496 SqFt	21,439 SqFt	22,124 SqFt
Lot Width at Front	99.8 Ft (interior*)	112.2 Ft (interior)	88.0 – 156.1 Ft (interior)	108.4 Ft (interior)	102.2 Ft (interior)
	151.2 Ft (corner)	198.9 Ft (corner)	150.3 – 199.2 Ft (corner)	177.2 Ft (corner)	181.6 Ft (corner)
Primary Street Setback	48.9 Ft	58.9 Ft	30.6 – 69.1 Ft	53.8 Ft	54.4 Ft
Side Setback	11.3 Ft	20.5 Ft	3.3 – 41.4 Ft	17.1 Ft	15.1 Ft
Rear Setback	77.0 Ft	104.4 Ft	27.4 – 179.4 Ft	94.7 Ft	90.1 Ft
Distance Between Buildings**	25.1 Ft	37.1 Ft	19.1 – 59.4 Ft	31.5 Ft	28.0 Ft
Building Height	20.5 Ft	25.8 Ft	15.0 Ft – 29.0 Ft	23.2 Ft	24.0 Ft

*Interior lots are defined as lots with properties abutting both sides.

**Distance between buildings as requested is not regulated in the Unified Development Ordinance, however “Distances between buildings” may be defined within an NCOD.

Impacts

The predominant built character of this area differs from the minimum standards that currently apply under the R-6 zoning district (see Figure 3). Minimum lot size, lot width, and front yard setback standards are significantly larger than the minimums required under the R-6 zoning. If new standards based on the predominant built character of the area were applied to this area through rezoning, the resulting NCOD would effectively prohibit the subdivision of existing lots currently allowed under the smaller minimum R-6 standards.

The North Ridge West neighborhood is built out somewhere between the standards for Residential-2 (R-2) and Residential-4 (R-4) zoning districts. Under the current zoning, some larger existing lots in the neighborhood could be subdivided into smaller lots that conform with the standards of R-6 zoning. A downzoning to change the base zoning district and apply the Residential-4 standards would result in all lots conforming to the majority of zoning standards, with the exception of side setback; where 13 out of 41 lots are less than the distance required under R-4 zoning.

In addition, both districts allow significantly smaller front yard setbacks (20 feet) than the built character represents - a minimum of 30.6 feet and predominant character of 48.9 feet.

Staff analysis provided a “suggested standard” shown in the table below, that would restrict the opportunity to subdivide lots by increasing the minimum lot size, and width. This suggested standard would allow the majority of homes to remain conforming, with the exception of a single irregularly shaped corner lot, that would be non-conforming due to structure location, not lot size or width at the front. Increasing the lot size and width minimums, would also make it impractical to increase the number of buildable lots in the district by recombining multiple lots, for example two lots recombined into three.

In addition to restricting the opportunity to subdivide lots, an NCOD would impact changes to existing buildings and properties. Any additions, changes, expansions, or alterations to existing structures would have to comply with the overlay district regulations. If the desired alterations exceeded district standards, the property owner would have to apply for a special use permit with limitations on the amount of expansion.

Figure 3. Comparison of existing zoning standards and predominant built character

Characteristic	Current Standard (R-6 District)	Predominant Character (75 th Percentile)	Residential-4 (R-4) District Standards	Suggested Standard
Lot Size (min)	6,000 SqFt	19,828 SqFt	10,000 SqFt	13,000 SqFt
Lot Width (min)	50 Ft (interior*) 65 Ft (corner)	99.8 Ft (interior) 151.2 Ft (corner)	65 Ft (interior) 80 Ft (corner)	80 Ft (interior) 125 Ft (corner)
Primary Street Setback (min)	10 Ft	48.9 Ft	20 Ft	30 Ft
Distance Between Buildings	N/A**	25.1 Ft	N/A**	20 Ft
Building Height	40 Ft	25.8 Ft	40 Ft	30 Ft

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Next Steps

A neighborhood meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 16, 2018 to discuss the results of this analysis. All property owners within the study area have been invited to attend. Following this meeting, City staff will present the results of the analysis and the neighborhood meeting discussion to City Council. Council will then decide whether to hold a public hearing to consider a text change to the UDO to incorporate these neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations. If the text change is approved, property owners will then be able to petition for a rezoning to apply the recently created Neighborhood Conservation District (NCOD) regulations to the North Ridge West area. A majority of property owners are required to sign the rezoning petition that would apply the NCOD. Alternatively, City Council may direct City Staff to initiate the rezoning.